Conceptualizing the Well-being of Religious Travellers

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ABSTRACT

The study about religious based spiritual tourism market and its travellers are scarce due to the complex relationship between tourism and religion. Spiritual travellers travel for ritual and spiritual renewal and not for the search of pleasure or leisure. We argue that the well-being of travellers during and after the journey will depend on the amount of preparations that they make based on the quality of the information sources acquired and individual characteristics of travellers. The aim of this is to offer an integrating vision of the relationships that exist between the antecedents of travellers pre-trip planning that may affect the overall experience of the journey and finally its consequence toward quality of life that been measure with six wellness dimensions.

Keywords: Spiritual, Religious Tourism, Quality of Life and Wellness Dimension, Information Acquisition, Islamic Travellers

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered one of the world’s largest growth industries. According to World Tourism Organization, tourism is the actions of an individual travelling and staying in certain places which is outside of their residents for certain intention (Rowe, Smith, & Borein, 2002). It seems like travel and tourism are important activities for some individuals to indulge themselves. They have passion to explore new places to find excitement and looking for new experiences. There are several types of motives for individual or groups in travelling around the world (Ambrož & Ovsenik, 2011). The reasons for travellers travelling are for leisure, enjoyment and to encounter spiritual values. The market for religious journey was estimated at $18 billion (Wright, 2007) and it significantly continues to attract millions of travellers every year around the world (Jansen and Ku¨ hl, 2008). The evidence World Religious Travel Association (WRTA), over 300 million travellers, travels to sacred sites in 2007.

Increases in spiritually driven travel have coincided with the growth of tourism in the modern era(Lloyd, 1998). Spiritually driven travelling has become widespread and commercialized in recent decades as travel has become easier and more affordable, and the number of people travelling has risen sharply, occupying an important segment of international tourism(Timothy & Olsen, 2006). The segment is used to be a small niche segment, but in the last five years, it has grown into a full-fledged industry. The market for religious travel has grown into an 18 billion industry worldwide(Hashim, Murphy, & Hashim, 2007). A continual growth in this market segment also seems to be a foreseeable trend in the future. Although this type of tourism is booming, research in this area is still limited, especially concerning traveller’s behaviour and the implications of such a journey on their well-being. Until recently relatively little attention has been paid to the subject in the tourism literature due to the complex relationship between tourism and religion (Stewart & Leggat, 1998; Vukonić, 1998).

A. Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism and is motivated by religious or spiritual commitment (Sharpley, 2009). It is unique from other tourism segments because it is motivated by a sense of duty and obligation rather than a pursuit for pleasure and leisure (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007). Religiousness is defined as a principle of trusts in a godly or incredible individual’s strength and procedure of reverence or other religious activities focussing like power (Beit(Hallahmi, 1975). Religious attendance strengthens and ensures person religious certainty and the particular explanation of individual’s experience. Religious loyalty or religiosity was been studied because it firmly connected with person’s thinking, attitude, emotional and physiological wellness (Chamberlain & Zika, 1992; McDaniel & Burnett, 1990; Pollner, 1989; Witter, Stock, Okun, & Haring, 1985). Religious travel can be regarded as an important time in people's lives because of its potential for a healing experience. Religious travelling is about the purchase of an experience, which could be an emotional, intellectual, spiritual or physical experience. Religious attendance strengthens and
ensures person religious certainty and the particular explanation of individual’s experience.

The term religious tourism is complex and can be interpreted in a variety of different ways. Despite the different perspectives and points of view in the sphere of religious tourism, it is clear that in a single space that can be defined as sacred, different types of tourism take place that have differences and also common elements. In quantifying and defining them is a complex task, since the difference between one type and another is based on motivation, a factor that is clearly subjective and difficult to ascertain. Some terms related to religion and tourism is cultural tourism, spiritual tourism, religious tourism and pilgrimages, which are different contexts within the same setting of the sacred site in question.

In Islam, religious and spiritual journeys can be divided into three forms of activities (Haq & Wong, 2010; Timothy & Olsen, 2006). The first activity is performing Hajj including Umrah which is the fifth pillars of Islam that are the fundamental of Muslim practices and institutions known as the five pillars of Islam. The visit is a compulsory visit for all Muslims to Mecca at the specific time frame from the 8th to 12th Dhu al-Hijjah. The second spiritual journey is Rihla, the journey in search of knowledge, commerce health or research. The third activity is called Ziyara. Ziyarais defined as a Muslim’s trip to visit the shrines, mosques, or monasteries for spiritual growth (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). The journey whether it is rihla or ziyara, with the purpose of spiritual growth and connection with Creator is considered as spiritual tourism (Haq & Wong, 2010).

### B. Wellness Dimension

Religion has been one of the factor why people travelling since ancient times (Wall & Mathieson, 2006) but according to Vukonic (1998), religious tourism is one of the most understudied areas in tourism research. There is a little information available about religious pilgrims (Egresi, Bayram, & Kara, 2012). Attention was focussed on the extent to which modern tourism practices can compare with, or the distinct from traditional pilgrimage in terms of social form and meaning (Smith, 1992). Although research on travellers’ satisfaction is extensive, few studies have connected the level of participation in activities while on journey that related to religious tourism. Enhanced knowledge in transformation of tourism are being exposed by latest studies which focusing to the literature on association between wellness and linking the initiative of resources, society welfare, assets and maintenance (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2010; Macbeth, Carson, & Northcote, 2004). Well-being is defined as the capacity to combine physical, nutritional, mental, spiritual, social and emotional aspects of life in such a way as to ensure positive health and maintain optimum quality of life (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2005). Wellness is stated as taking personal responsibility to direct life towards optimal health and well-being. It is the state of well-being that is directed towards achieving and maximizing individual potential by balancing the different dimensions of life and health.

Travelling can be constantly being mentally stimulated which makes us feel like we are active. Health and wellness travel should not be limited to just the physical side but involves emotional, social, environmental and spiritual health. To enrich the experience and satisfaction throughout the journey the travellers need to take precaution all aspects of our health. The dimensions of wellness encompass physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, social, and intellectual. Each dimension is a critical component in the lifelong process of moving towards improving the overall quality of life.

## II. ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF RELIGIOUS JOURNEY

Given the fast growth in the religious tourism market and global pandemic threat, there is urgent need to understand well-being of travellers and their characteristics in the religious journey experience and how it can affect their quality of life after journey. There is a need to understand how the preparation before the journey affects the quality of the experience and satisfaction and consequently the travellers’ state of well-being during and after the journey. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to develop the conceptual understanding on how the religious travellers’ preparations that act as antecedents that may affect the overall experience of the journey and finally consequently of quality of life after the journey that can be monitored with six dimensions of wellness - physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and financial. We believe the individual characteristic such as level of religiosity and risk taking behaviour will moderate the overall experience of the journey.
A. Preparation: Product Knowledge

Information search is likely to take place whenever travellers realize that there is a need to make a decision. Information acquisition is needed for destination selection and for onsite decisions such as selecting accommodation, transportation, activities, and tour operators (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). The information search is a process of activation of knowledge from internal source such as information stored in the memory or acquisition of knowledge from the external sources such as collecting information from peers, friends’ family and the marketplace (Blackwell, D’Souza, Taghian, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). It is a need to consult various type of information before making the final purchase decision. Information search are important in order to make a decision which producing a result for certain purpose (Awasthy, Banerjee, & Banerjee, 2012). The activity of information search is important task in order to understand the point of travelling and delivering quality knowledge for the travellers (Cho & Jang, 2008). Consumers can find information from their external or internal environments. Houston and Rothschild (1978) state that information search and acquisition can be an active or passive process, depending on the involvment of the product. Varieties of channels in modern communication are designed for traveller to obtain information or knowledge which can give input for them before travelling. It depends on how the traveller understand the context that are presented (Hjalager, Jensen, Fuchs, Ricci, & Cantoni, 2012, February).

In tourism related activity information search can be seen as a key element in order to have a pleasant and safe journey. Tourist information search can be divided into three major components: motives, determinants, and sources (Fodness & Murray, 1997). The primary motive of travellers of searching the information is for preplanning the journey according to the need and also to enhance the quality of the trip by reducing the level of associated uncertainty for onsite decision making. In terms of determinants of search, it is a dimension that effect information search such as past experience, travelling partner, the presence of friends or relative at the destination (Snepenger, Meged, Snelling, & Worrall, 1990). Finally, under the sources of information, the type of information can be classified into commercial or non-commercial sources and received from personal or impersonal communication. The activity of information search can be conceptualized as a dynamic process where travellers use different amounts and types of information sources in response to internal and external contingencies to facilitate travel planning (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Gursoy & McCleary, 2004). We proposed that the well-being of spiritual travellers’ journey may depend on how well the preparation has been done by the travellers based on the quantity and quality of internal and external information sources.

Based on the discussion the following proposition is proposed:

P1: The degree of a traveller’s product knowledge will affect the level of experience during and after the journey.

B. The Process: Satisfaction and Experience of Religious Journey

People are attracted to religious journey as their motivation for travelling (Pourthaheri, Rahmani, & Ahmadi, 2012). Religious journey has contributing the profit for every countries like other types of journey (Karar, 2010). Religious tourism is different from other leisure and tourism activities, and is viewed to a great extent as experiential consumption. However, this experiential consumption is beyond the service quality received from the service provider. Service experience can be defined as the subjective personal reactions or feelings that are experienced by travellrs when consuming the service (Chen & Chen, 2010). Hence, the perceived quality is much more related with their experiences throughout the process of ritual and journey of the pilgrimage than services per se given by the service provider, such as the hotel or restaurant they visited. This experience will differ from consumer to consumer. In religious tourism, the quality of service received will be a secondary or additional benefit to accommodate a pleasant visitation and journey. Unlike service quality, there is still little research shedding light on the experiential quality of specific tourism participation such as religious tourism.

Experience and satisfaction are interrelated and important attributes for a pleasant and enjoyable journey. In the tourism context, satisfaction is primarily stated as a function of pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences. Ojha (1982) pointed out, satisfaction is not just from good sights but also from the behaviour one encounters, receives, the information acquired and the efficiency with which the needs are served.
When experiences compared to expectations result in feelings of gratification, the traveller is satisfied; however, when they result in feelings of displeasure, the traveller is dissatisfied (Reisinger & Turner, 2003). The concept of experience itself becomes a key concept within the study field of marketing of cultural heritage (Rojas & Camarero, 2006) or even in religious and spiritual tourism. As a result, consumer satisfaction is determined, most times, by the total experiences obtained after making the visit.

Traveller satisfaction can be defined as traveller satisfaction is the outcome of the interaction between a tourist’s experience and the expectations at the destination area. Consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one of the attributes leads to dissatisfaction or satisfaction with the overall destination. According to Chon and Olsen (1991) there is a significant relationship between tourists’ expectations on their destination and tourists’ satisfaction. If the expectation is above the experience of travel service and product the travellers will be satisfied with their travel experience.

Based on the discussion the following propositions are proposed:

P2: The higher the positive travel service and product the more satisfy the travel experience will be.

P2a: The higher the levels of the quality of total experience of travellers the more positive quality of life they will experience.

C. Outcome: Quality of life

The meaning of quality of life can be described as the interconnection of quality of life and life fulfillment while some of the researchers define quality of life in the context of life fulfilment (Dolnicar, Yanamandram, & Cliff, 2012). Subjective well-being is concerned with a person evaluations of the quality of their lives, as additional indicators for informing or evaluating public policy (Loewenstein & Ubel, 2008). The measure of psychological well-being is a challenging task. The study of subjective well-being has been the issue of extensive research resulting in the emergence of fields such as hedonic psychology (Kahneman, Diener, & Schwarz, 1999), positive psychology (Seligman, 2002), and happiness economics (Frey & Stutzer, 2002). The six dimensions – physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, social, intellectual, and wellness – will be used to analyse travellers’ personal level of wellness after the journey.

Based on the discussion the following propositions are proposed:

P3: The degree of a traveller’s overall well-being is depending on the result of the travellers’ preparation and experience of their journey.

P3a: The degree of quality of life will be reflected in each wellness dimension (six dimensions).

D. Moderator: Individual Personal Characteristic

The first moderator for this religious tourism is religiosity. Religiosity or individual piety by virtue of being devout to their respective religion is an important trait to the success of the spiritual travellers’ journey. Faith in one’s religion can give a person the strength to carry on during the struggle through difficulty. Religious and spiritual involvement may provide additional ways of dealing and coping with problems (Pargament, 1997). Religious practices motivate spiritual growth, while spiritual practices are often a salient aspect of religious participation (Armstrong & Crowther, 2002). The term “coping” in this context means resolving the difficulties that confront travellers while travelling. A religious person may do a number of things, one of which is praying, as an active, cognitive coping strategy (Holahan & Moos, 1987). Studies show that religion seems to boost one’s sense of control, and this appears to be linked with better health (Loewenthal & Cornwall, 1993).

The second moderator for this study is risk taking behaviour of individuals varies. According to Aro et al., (2009) there is an urgent need to learn about traveller’s risk perceptions and risk taking tendencies related to different kinds of travel (Aro et al., 2009; Koenig, George, & Peterson, 1998). This is important for promoting relevant preventative behaviour, for planning health promotion, and also for avoiding societal and economic disruption related to any threats during and after travelling. Risk perceptions reflect a broader set of cognitive and affective beliefs than simply estimations of the likelihood of an event (Marwick, 1995). Furthermore, not all fundamental threat come along with leisure journey such as
being murdered or kidnapped, the type of travel awareness endorse hesitation to its result (Walsh, 1986). Journey awareness are comes in intangible services devoted all together with production and normally difficult to regulated, hence travellers’ apparent risk is probably high (Zeithaml, 1981). Risk is a common daily phenomenon that could be experiences by every person to some extent. There are people who avoid it as much as they can, others seem to be attracted to it (Pizam et al., 2004). Risk can be describe as “the chance of injury, damage or loss,” “dangerous chance,” and “hazard” (Armstrong & Crowther, 2002). It is not very clear if there is a broad tendency to involve in risk behaviour, or whether individuals vary in the type of risk behaviour in which they involve. Based on the discussion, we suggest that individual characteristics can or will moderate the experience of the spiritual journey. Specifically, the personal level of religiosity and risk taking behaviour will strengthen or weaken travellers’ relationships concerning the level of total experience. Based the discussion the following propositions, are proposed:

P4: The individual characteristics (religiosity and risk taking behaviour) moderate the level of travellers’ overall experience.

III. CONCLUSION
In today’s dynamic global environment, understanding on how Muslim travellers obtain their knowledge in religious tourism is vital for marketing management decisions. The marketers can influence travellers’ destination and service selection decisions by designing an effective communication strategy at information acquisition. Theoretically, the propositions developed here points towards potentially interesting links with more structurally focused approaches on how the pre-trip preparation before the spiritual journey affect the aftermath of the journey to the wellbeing of the travellers. The paper encourages service providers and travel agents to understand the different segment of tourism and the critical determinants of travellers’ state of well-being during, before and after the journey. Knowing the overall picture on how travellers acquire information is important to marketers. Application of basic market segmentation strategies based on the pattern of information source utilization and media selection will enable the company to focus on positioning strategies. It is also important to understand the main components in information acquisition process. Based on this knowledge the marketers can design communication and message strategies targeted specifically at different stages in the information search process, which will lead to efficient use of resources and more success in attracting travellers to their specific destinations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT
The authors would like to thank Universiti Sains Malaysia for funding this research under the Research University grant 1001/PMGT/816211

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